

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47), the ranking female member on the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), was successful in ensuring key sexual assault provisions were included in the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act. These provisions, which received unanimous support from Rep. Sanchez’s colleagues on the Military Personnel Subcommittee, will help ensure that our military leaders are taking an active role in preventing and prosecuting cases of sexual assault, and that victims have access to meaningful legal and counseling services.

“I am pleased that this year’s National Defense Authorization Act will include concrete initiatives to help prevent cases of sexual assault in the military,” said Rep. Sanchez. “Although the military has taken significant steps to address this issue, there has actually been an 11 percent increase in reports of sexual assault cases involving military personnel, including a 16 percent increase in combat areas like Afghanistan and Iraq. In order to effectively curb this problem, Congress and our military leaders need to work harder, together, to create a safe, inclusive environment for every soldier who serves this country. The provisions I advocated for in the NDAA will help encourage that kind of collaboration.”

In December 2009, the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services released a report with the group’s findings and recommendations regarding the issue of sexual assault in the military. Rep. Sanchez submitted the following key provisions to the Armed Services Committee to ensure their inclusion in this year’s National Defense Authorization Act:

- Language directing every U.S. military service secretary to ensure all commanders and senior enlisted leaders are actively involved in sexual assault prevention and awareness programs.
- Language ensuring victims are offered adequate legal assistance and basic protections (like privileged communications).
- Language ensuring sexual assault victims receive safe and confidential forensic examinations by qualified medical personnel.
- Language establishing a universal hotline to facilitate victim reporting, both domestically and overseas.
- Language codifying sexual assault prevention and response programs, and ensuring the Secretary of Defense and combat commanders fully implement these programs. This provision would also create guidelines for handling sexual assault cases that involve coalition forces, or occur in remote and deployed environments.